

School District Information about MTBE

What is MTBE and at what level does it become dangerous?

Please see attached document from the United States Government Environmental Protection Agency explaining MTBE in detail.

While the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) do not have specific regulations around MTBE, the acknowledged limit is 70 micrograms per liter. At 20 micrograms per liter you may be able to smell MTBE in the water, and at 40 micrograms you may be able to begin to taste MTBE in the water. The detection limit in testing for MTBE is 0.5 micrograms per liter.

How does the Charlton Middle School and Heritage Elementary School drinking water rate relative to recommended MTBE levels?

There have been no detections of MTBE at Charlton Middle School since 2011, and the highest level ever detected was 0.6 micrograms per liter. There have been no detections of MTBE at Heritage Elementary School since 2008, with the highest tested level being 1.4 micrograms per liter in 2007.

What does the district do to ensure drinking water safety?

For schools that are not on the town water supply, the District contracts with WhiteWater, Inc. to act as our Public Water System operator. Testing is per the Mass DEP schedule, but the district has voluntarily increased testing for MTBE to monthly.

What additional steps have been put into place recently?

At the School Committee meeting of February 10, 2016, the past detections at both the Heritage Elementary School and Charlton Middle School were discussed. As a result of these discussions, the District has created this document to help the community understand the facts around MTBE and to put into context the detections we have had.

Additionally, the District will begin to test for MTBE on a monthly basis. The District recognizes the concerns around the drinking water and the ever present fear of the migrating gasoline spill into the areas of the schools. We will continue to work vigilantly with WhiteWater to ensure regular monitoring, testing and public communication.

Monthly results and, if necessary, any remedial actions taken, will be made available to the public in a timely manner via the district website (www.dcrsd.org).